

# national park service

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## **Francis Drake's Port Visible Again at Point Reyes National Seashore**

For the first time in 45 years, this winter's storms have restored the little cove at Drakes Bay to its historic configuration where many scholars believe Francis Drake repaired and refitted his *Golden Hind* in June and July 1579. As predicted, the cove reappeared during the cyclic changes created by tides, currents, winds, and storms in the channels and sand spits between the bluffs that frame the mouth of Drakes Estero at Point Reyes National Seashore.

The cove, with its sheltering sand spit and surrounding hills, is depicted as *Portus Novae Albionis* – the Port of New England – in an inset of a 16<sup>th</sup> Century map of Drake's circumnavigation. The inset was copied from a drawing during Drake's 36-day visit.

The cove was discovered in 1952 after a two-year search by the late Matthew P. Dillingham, President of the Drake Navigators Guild, a private research organization. The cove had reappeared in 1947 and survived until the winter of 1956-1957, when it was destroyed by storms. It was given the name "Drakes Cove" by the late Fleet Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, USN.

On the afternoon of April 18 of this year, Guild members Robert Allen and Raymond Aker walked the beach of Drakes Bay at low tide for the annual monitoring of changes wrought by the winter storms at the mouth of Drakes Estero. Great erosion was evident in the sand bars and new channels had appeared. They climbed the 200-foot high bluff to the viewpoint overlooking the north side of the cove where Drake's first artist had apparently made his sketch of *Portus Novae Albionis* 422 years ago.

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**Point Reyes National Seashore**

**Point Reyes Station, California 94956**

There before them once again they saw the little cove, sheltered by the same shaped sand spit that had been essential for careening the *Golden Hind* safely out of tidal flow and surge from the sea. There again was the channel that led into the cove from the anchorage within the mouth of the Estero where Drake had anchored on June 17, 1579.

Research using charts made from the late 18<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries, supplemented by aerial photographs since 1943, showed that the cove reappeared approximately every 53 years. The cove was expected to reappear early this new century. It returned 54 years after its previous return in 1947.

Guild members Allen and Aker, who had seen the cove from 1952 – 1956 as Drakes had seen it in 1579, were privileged to see it again, true to prediction, in 2001.

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